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The White Messenger

And Other War Poems

Edith M. Thomas

THE WHITE MESSENGER AND OTHER WAR POEMS

BY EDITH M. THOMAS

THE DANCERS

THE GUEST AT THE GATE

CASSIA

THE CHILDREN OF CHRISTMAS

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THE WHITE MESSENGER
and other War Poems

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BOSTON

The White Messenger

AND OTHER WAR POEMS

EDITH M. THOMAS

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IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY!

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THE WHITE MESSENGER

Time—Some years hence.

Place—Village in a great country far to the East, in Europe. Also, the outskirts of a considerable town.

Chief Persons: THE WHITE MESSENGER.
AN OLD SCHOOLMASTER.
YOUNG STUDENTS.
THE VILLAGE FREE-THINKER.
Soldiers and their officers. IMPERIAL OFFICER.
A Veteran of a former war.
PILGRIM *and others, strangers to the village who bring news.*
Women and girls. Among these last, one who is mad—MARUSSIA.

A YOUNG STUDENT—When I was small I heard
my father say:
"The cause of war is simpler than men think;
The question is of Bread—Bread for the World."
He said it with a frown I did not like,
Relaxing to a smile I dreaded more,
Not yet grown up to know its purport all.
He said, "Yes, now there will be bread enough—"
And paused to have some listener question him,
"How do you figure that? Your reasons, pray."
He set them forth: "This way it is, good friends:
Five million mouths (or is it six, perchance?)
Withdrawn,—their hunger the black earth has
stilled—
Too many eaters once—now, otherwise,—
For those who yet abide in mortal flesh
There will be bread enough for years to come!"
Back came the cruel smile I winced to see:

"Excellent wheat is grown from those same fields
Where men were reaped and mingled with the soil."
Then, sweeping with his hand a mighty curve—
"All Europe's fertile—ay, a rich-fed soil!"
A MAN OF THE VILLAGE—Your father spoke, then, of The Bloodiest War?
A WOMAN—Surely! What war could ever match with that?
A YOUNG GIRL—My soul! How can we ever eat again
One root or fruit that comes from out the earth?
How can one live and entertain such thoughts!
THE FREE-THINKER—Well, then! Drive off such thoughts—eat and be merry.
You have your choice. It has been ever so.
The boy has spoken wisely—for a boy;
Much like his father, whom we all revered.
THE OLD SCHOOLMASTER (*soothingly, to the Girl.*)
Young lady, it is not so ill, I think—
To die in battle, and to live again,—
Sometimes to stir the sluggish veins of men.
There's Thrasymene, of the Roman tale:
Blood turned itself to wine in that old field;
Year after year, no vintage rivaled that,
And it may be, that flowers, too, brighter are,
Whose hidden roots have had such cherishing.
YOUNG STUDENT—As if to point what you have said just now,
Here comes Marussia, singing,—with her "flowers."
You cannot see them—they are of her brain—
This poor Marussia! Yet how young she keeps;
She has not changed at all, in all these years.

A Woman—Sometimes the Good God graces madness so—
As though it were a dream, untouched by Age.

Marussia, who is mad, has come among the group of her neighbors. She has her apron gathered in one hand. With the other makes the motion of reaping; and, from time to time, stoops and enacts the pantomime of gathering flowers and putting them in her apron. Sings:

Reap! Reap!
Reap from morn to night,
All among the corn.
Your work is done with light—
Then, sleep, sleep!
But mine goes on till morn.

Bind, bind!
Sisters, bind and sheave,
All among the corn.
I take the flowers you leave—
O blind, blind!
Red flowers your knives have torn!

Bloom and bud!
Down—down they go—
All among the corn.
They are not poppies—no!
But drops of blood—
Ah————————!

Marussia, her hands to her head, sinks suddenly, and lies prone on the ground. After a short minute some one stoops, lifts her to her feet, and gently

leads her away in the direction of her home.

A WOMAN (*Speaks*)—Always the song stops off in
that same cry.
Then, always, sinks she to the ground. 'Twas so
That day they brought her tidings in the field,
Of him in battle killed before Lvóv.
She sees the crimson only;—now, 'tis flowers,
Now, drops of blood. They say there is no cure.

The conversation is resumed.

FREE-THINKER (*to Student*)—Your father rea-
soned well. 'Twas always so:—
Too many mouths to feed—the Good God, then
(*Or Who-or-What-you-will*) sets men at strife,
And weeds the super-numbers from the field—
STUDENT—(I said not just those words, I would
explain—)
FREE-THINKER—Then, for awhile there is enough
to eat.
A blessed thing is war, you see. Instead
Of shriveling to the grave, there is swift death,
Glory and death—and, what avails the most,
The place you filled at table given now
To some poor-devil brother—hungry, else.

The Student, the Girl and others whisper among themselves, as though irked by the discussion, and finally leave the company.

A MAN (*who has just joined the group, and heard the last words of the conversation*) *Speaks with emphasis.*

It seems the Who-or-What-you-will foresees
There's a new shortage in the bread-supply;
A few odd millions more will have to go
Ere Plenty sits a-smiling in the land.
Now, there's a chance, if you are great of soul,
To leave your place at table (after grace!)

To some poor-devil brother—whom you will.
THE SCHOOLMASTER—Speak out your meaning, man—and, let me say,
I do not like these careless blasphemies.
FREE-THINKER—Speak out, in any terms! I see you've news—
News from the restless and tormented world.
We thought it peace! A vain-dream interval!
You do not come to talk of peace, I think!
MAN—There you are right—we go to war again.
WOMAN—To war! Christ and the blessed Saints forbid!
FREE-THINKER—They never bade, nor yet forbade —the Saints!
I tell you, all that's fable! Brother, go on;
Say where's the wild-beast circus ordered *now?*
Where now let loose the were-wolves once were men?
MAN—Well, think! 'Tis but some little time gone by,
As time is counted in a nation's age,
Since our great land-locked land free waters gained,
And broke the fetters of the winter through,
And bade *Bon voyage* to our ships of trade,
That now might share the chiefdom of the seas
With nations of the elder heritage.
These ever feared us, with the ice-chains on—
Think you, with freedom they would fear us less?
The old fear now is up again—that's all;
There's concert in that fear, and little short
Of miracle can turn this drift toward war.
OLD SCHOOLMASTER—Why should they have so feared—all Europe's folk?
MAN—They feared our magnitude—weakness for us:

A young child, but a child of giant stock,
That for the giant grown they still mistook!
Our power to work them harm—our will, mistook.
They thought us brutish, torpid as from cold,
But that, one day, sloth-heavy, we would fall
And crush them with accumulated force.
OLD SCHOOLMASTER—They never knew what
docile heart was ours,
Docile—yet having something it could teach,
(Even as unaware a child can teach).
They heeded not that poet of our tongue
Who said so well of his great Motherland:

"She knows not with mere mind alone,
Nor by the ell she measures wholly;
But she has something all her own—
Her Faith—her Faith can guide her solely."

MAN—But sir, we dream. For while we talk of
Faith,
'Tis clear our Motherland must rise, must act:
'Tis War, unless some unimagined chance
Or masterful negotiation help.

Enter, hobbling, a Veteran of a last-Century war. Excitedly, and with exasperation, he flourishes a crutch, addressing the group collectively.

VETERAN—Yes, yes, you needn't tell me, for I've
heard
What you all know—but do not know as I!
You boys, down in the secret hearts of you, (Addresses the youths)
Gloat on the wild adventure war will bring;
I know the sign—I see it in your eyes.
'Twas seen in mine, no doubt,—how long ago!
But listen! I have words to say to you—

Not words of mine, but words that have outlived
The wild adventure I once thought so dear.
I met the master—him whose books you read;
You call him Genius—but I call him Man.
Well, then, I met the master just before
Our troop was off for fighting in the East.
We greeted—he was ever one of us.
I said, "To-morrow I am off for war."
Then, with his look, as of a child perplexed,
He questioned me. "Why do you go?" he asked.
I answered him, with words the first that came
In my astonishment: "I go—because—
Someone must go to war." Deeply he gazed;
Then seemed to let his full heart out in words:
"No one need go to war!" "What, then?" I cried.
His look was like a child's again,—a child
Whose plain and simple world is all made up:
"No one need go to war. If any *will,*
Then let it be those at the head of things,
Whose secret conclaves have devised 'the Cause'—
Emperors, diplomats, and generals—
Let them go fight the war that they propose!
It is their right, their pleasure, if they will:
Their lives are theirs to give—or not to give.
And, likewise, yours are yours, to give—or not.
It is your war? Then, feed it with your lives;
If theirs, their lives be forfeit to 'the Cause.'"
'Twas so the master spoke. I thought him mad.
But I was only young! I went to war. . . .
This stump, this wooden clatter, tells the rest.
Since those old days I've lived through other wars;
But always come those words—"Why do you go?"
MAN—But what's the upshot? Here is War, again.
A WOMAN—Oh, somehow, still I pray the cup shall

pass!

VETERAN—The only certain way to make it pass
Would be, Refuse it when it comes to you!
(*All show opposition*).

OLD SCHOOLMASTER—Why, that would be the act of renegade!

WOMAN—Could one do that—and do the will of God?

VETERAN—How know we 'tis God's will that we should war?

WOMAN—Does He not will that we should serve the land
That gave us birth, and all the laws whereby
We earn, and keep that which our toil has gained?

THE FREE-THINKER—Yes, love your land and hug it jealously;
Hate other lands the more you love your own;
Let other landsmen love their lands, by due,
And hate the rest! Keep, doggedly, this path,
And you shall come to war! . . . Well, love your land; (*to the Woman*)
My land is Earth. I could not be exiled,
For, send me to your 'foreign parts,' I, still,
Would not have changed my country's bounds—the Earth.
(Yet this small village I have never left!)

VETERAN—But, man, you speak the master's doctrine. He
Proclaimed it in the harvest-fields, at work
Like any peasant of us all, and wrote
In many books what from his lips we heard.
In that old time—not now, we thought him mad.

A long-frocked Pilgrim, with staff, has joined the Group.

PILGRIM—There is a woman most regard as mad,

Who with like teaching goes from land to land.
Unwarned, she comes to laborers in the field,
Or, ere one knows it, in the market-place
Appears, compels attention to her words;
Speaks briefly of the cloud that lowers around,
And then, "Will ye have War? Or, will ye Peace?
For with you is the choice, and with none else."
If any ask her name—"No name—*in His!*"
With upward glance—the one reply she gives.
Some call her "Sister—" and it serves not ill,
A certain youth so glows in her dark eyes;
Some call her "Mother—" that too, suits as well
The silver-shining hair that frames the face.
A burning pallor so lights up her face,
You think of frost!—you think of wind-blown fire!
Some call her, therefore, "The White Messenger."
"The Renegade Of God," some say—more like;
Since, as some angel, she speaks flaming words
That drive 'gainst that which we have reverenced most;
And yet, it seems there's Deity in her words,
Commanding that mere men shall make their choice
Higher than emperor's will or priestly writ.
WOMAN—Whence does she come—what is her native land?
PILGRIM—It is not said with certainty of fact:
She goes from land to land; each land makes claim
That from its soil she sprung, and has some tale
Of tragedy supreme, but all outlived
Before her wide world-visiting began.
Most think the terrors of the Great War left
Her reason touched, and yet, strange powers bestowed,
That not in woman have been known before—
No, nor in man!

OLD SCHOOLMASTER—What special powers are these?

PILGRIM—Well, first, the gift of tongues the Apostles used
With Medes and Parthians and Arabians,
And all as one—that Pentecostal Day.
'Tis so with her: She speaks all tongues, in turn,
According to the people whom she fronts.
Some who have heard her, heard a rushing wind,
And saw the cloven tongues, like as of fire,
Descend and play about her, as she spoke.
For that I do not vouch. But, say she came—
(As she does come, quite spirit-like, unwarned)
Among us, here, you would not dream her speech
Other than ours, than native to this land.
And, more than this, she would use homely terms
Current in your small corner of the world
And nowhere else—the which would make her seem
Sharer of all your dearest life and thought.
So, would she lay upon you her belief,
And make you feel it had been *always yours!*
This is her way of work, where'r she goes;
And this is why they deem her dangerous.

WOMAN—What then befalls—Do they not kill her then?

PILGRIM—It seems not. Yet the prisons of each land
Have held her for a season, then released.

MAN—Released?

PILGRIM—Because in duress she becomes
Quite stript of all that power to move on souls,
Forgets the speech of those she wrought upon,
Setting their hearts on fire, as though mere words
Upon her tongue had been as living coals—
Forgets (if 'tis not feigning) every tongue

With which her jailers ply her—mute, to *them;*
Sits like a dreamer, borne away in dreams—
Comes back, to take with silent gentleness
Such favors as relenting hands bestow.
What wonder, then, if those who prisoned her
Decide: "This woman's hour of madness past,
She's like a child, and harmless as a child;
And, being outland, as she plainly is,
We should no longer have her on our charge,
But let her pass to her own land again."
So say the servants of whatever State.
The doors are opened—she is forth; and, set
Beyond that country's borders, for a time
No man, no public print, reports her face.
WOMAN—Where is she then?
PILGRIM—Ah, that's the mystery!
Meantime, the wildfire of her words creeps on,
Creeps under, wheresoever she has been,
And rises like an altar-flame approved,
Straight up to Heaven burning true and clear.
OLD SCHOOLMASTER (*to person nearest him*)—
By this, one sees what stand the Pilgrim takes!
PILGRIM (*not observing interruption*)—The dull soul of the peasant has been fired:
He meets war's levy with the old earth's force,
Rooted and resolute, stands out command,
Scorns all appeal, or threat of village priest,
Though, hitherto, so lamblike to be led.
VETERAN—And then what happens?—there's the thing I'd know!
PILGRIM—For one so nearly born a mute as he,
The peasant's much to say—and says it, too:
"No, no,—it is to kill—to *kill,* I say.

Me? No! I never lifted hand to kill,
Nor in my thoughts had murder towards a man!
What now! I am no coward, but will not skulk
Among a million—kill—and call it *War!*
No! Do your killings for yourselves, but I
Will pass to God blood-guiltless, when He calls.
VETERAN—What happens then?
PILGRIM—Why, that which only can:
Kings must have soldiers—if soldiers will have kings—
SCHOOLMASTER—Oh, have a care my friend; your words are bold!
VETERAN—Go on, go on—they're bold, but not too bold.
What happens to the man?
PILGRIM—If he persists,
Up 'gainst a wall he goes. The hissing lead
Searches the heart that's learned a dangerous truth
And dared to out with it! . . . But that's not all—
At least not always all. For here and there
The man's example like contagion works;
And they remember her who on their souls,
As she had been God's envoy, laid the charge:
"Go not to war for any cáuse or man—
Blood-guiltless pass to God, when He shall call."
And so it is that several suffer death
Before the rest to ancient custom yield.
FREE-THINKER—Why, 'tis a madness caught from soul to soul,
Like Early-Christian frenzy to be torn
By lions—for a Caesar's novel sport!
VETERAN—'Tis Early-Christian—
SCHOOLMASTER—Who was that that spoke?
VETERAN—*I* say, 'tis Christlike to go glad to death,

That others shall not die—
SCHOOLMASTER—All this you had
From him you call "the master;" but not yet
Is everyone convinced his word was law.
To the Pilgrim.
But answer us this question: how should we—
Plain mortals, bear ourselves in such a case?
Think you, it would be right to fall away
From our own Emperor, when need was sore,
Nor service render him, who serves the land?
Not to my thinking! He commands our hearts.
VARIOUS VOICES—And mine, and mine!
SCHOOLMASTER—Our glorious Emperor,
You well remember, ever stood for peace,
Implored his brother-sovereigns to hold off—
Was loth to war—warred only when he must.
A MAN—For my part, I stand by the Emperor.
A WOMAN—My man stands by the Emperor! I'm proud.
ANOTHER WOMAN—Not mine! I will not let him go—not I!
FIRST WOMAN—What, what! for these wild words you could be held!
A NEWCOMER (*just arriving*)—For one and all there's offered chance to show
What we would do. The Royal Officer
Recruits in yonder town across the steppe.
There's trouble brewing, too, from an odd source—
The strangest woman, come from who knows where,
Speaks treasonable things that men receive
As though it were the bread of life she broke.
I would advise you all—hear for yourselves.
(*All move in the direction indicated by the speaker, with exception of Schoolmaster and Pilgrim.*)
SCHOOLMASTER (*to Pilgrim*)—

What can she do? Our tongue she does not speak,
How can she steal men's loyalties away,
Without the use of words they know?
PILGRIM—Trust her—
Or trust the Power that rules her—she will *speak!*

Recruiting in the outskirts of a town. At one side soldiers with their officers drilling. The drill has been interrupted by The White Messenger, who is seen confronting officer and line of soldiers. The rumor that has preceded her and her remarkable appearance have produced a profound effect. She speaks, using the phrase of the people. The officer in command looks bewildered. The men, unformed, stand in rapt attention. One has dropped upon his knees. A few would make demonstration against her, but are halted, as she continues speaking.

Most of the previous Company are present. In addition Officers, Soldiers and the Sweetheart of one of the Soldiers. Close at the side of the White Messenger is Marussia, apparently cured of her affliction. She casts looks of adoration on her new friend.

Enter Women of the former group, running.

WOMAN—'Tis as they said. It's the White Messenger.
Mad, mad, of course—two mad ones there you see;
Marussia's with her—like to like!
OTHER WOMAN—Oh, hush!
We came to hear this Wonder—not to talk.
If this can make a man fall on his knees,
At least, a woman ought to hold her tongue.
THE WHITE MESSENGER—My brothers, I was sent to bring the Word:
THERE SHALL BE NO MORE WAR. The Word is sure

As Heaven, whence it cometh—from the Throne.
Now, having heard, we have no other choice,
Than to obey and onward bear the Word.
To a soldier.
Lay down that sword, that flashes back the sun—
That vaunts itself against the blessed Light.
Low lay it on the ground. So. Under foot,
Where it must ever be, hereafter—ay!
Nor quench again its scorching thirst for blood.
(*Soldier, as one under enchantment, obeys. She advances her foot, resting it up on the flat blade*).
To another Soldier.
Stack thou those arms that spit the hissing death—
Those lances, too, that pierce the soft life through,
And let it out in writhings horrible.
The soldier starts to perform this command, then, recoils.
THE SOLDIER—O Barynya, we dare not stack the arms
Without his order who has set our ranks—
Even the servant of our Emperor,
To whom we all are sworn—to love and serve.
He holds our very lives within his hand;
And these are forfeit, if we break our oath.
MESSENGER—Which rather wouldst thou—break an oath unjust,
Or take a life,—say, *this* man's next to thee!
SOLDIER—I take his life? Impossible to *think!*
Why, he's my neighbor, guiltless of all wrong
Towards me or mine—as brother is to me!
MESSENGER—Unthinking! All men brothers are to thee:
Thou'lt kill some brother, if to war thou go.
SOLDIER—Lady, that's different! Not for revenge,

Nor any reason touching one's own self,
Does one man kill another, when it's War!
No! War's not murder: *for we never see*
The one we kill—
MESSENGER—O man, if thou didst see,
What then? If thou didst see his agony?
If thou didst hear his moaned-out, long farewell?
What if, the dreadful battle being done,
The Angel of the Lord did make thee walk
With him between the windrows of the dead,
And said, "Stop here! We marked thee, out of Heaven;
We followed up the shots thy hazard sent;
And here, and here, and here, behold thy work!
This man—and this—lost years of life *through thee;*
Thou livest still, and darest still to pray
To One whose handiwork thou didst destroy!"
What wouldst thou do—destroyer of the thing
Thou mad'st not? Speak—as to that Angel, thou!
SOLDIER—I would my own life take—upon the spot!
MESSENGER—Oh, take no life—another's or thine own:
Blood-guiltless, pass to God, when He shall call.
SOLDIER (*awed*)—O Angel of the Lord (for so I think!),
I do thy bidding. War's no more for me:
Blood-guiltless, will I pass, when He shall call.
Officer, recovering himself, comes forward. To soldier.
OFFICER—You are bewitched: 'Tis magic shuts your eyes.
Wake to your duty, comrade! Do not fear
This one transgression of your loyal troth
Shall earn for you court-martial, shame, and death:
Another would—I promise you! So, wake.

SOLDIER—I *am* awake—the first time in my life:
The Angel of the Lord has touched my eyes,
And all comes clear. I will not go to war!

A Girl, the Soldier's Sweetheart, rushes forward, imploring him.

GIRL—Belovéd, the White Witch has wrought on you!
My light, my life, take back the words you said!
Confess, you have been wrong; renew your faith,
And give your oath to serve the Emperor—

SOLDIER—Belovéd, let the Emperor serve God
(If that he can, destroying those God made);
I will serve Man—and God, and none between.

Officer intervenes between Soldier and Girl. To the latter; then to Guard.

OFFICER—Leave him to us. He is most obdurate.
Contagion breathes from him. Conduct him hence.
Yonder, the court we hold. (*Turns to go, with Guard and Prisoner; stops to give command*)—and seize that Hexe! (*Goes out*).

Soldiers who remain look at one another questioningly, as to the order.

SOLDIER—I dare not: he, perchance, has said the truth;
Then, who should bind the Angel of the Lord!

The Soldiers make no effort to arrest the White Messenger, who stands as before. A group of women surround her.

GIRL (*The Soldier's Sweetheart*)—Oh, they will kill him! You have caused his death!
Oh, wicked woman!——

MARUSSIA (*Placing herself between Messenger and Girl*)—No, no, she is good—
Not wicked. She has touched me. And her touch
Has cured and made entire a wounded mind.

Hurt long ago—that none could reach, to cure!
GIRL—But what is that to me? My own must die!
MESSENGER—Believe me, child, not now shall he meet death.
GIRL—But how? You can not loose or bind, unless
You are, in truth, the Angel of the Lord!
MESSENGER (*To Girl and Marussia*)—Come we will follow them, we three. Come, come!

They proceed in direction of the court. Soldiers approach to restrain them. Messenger waves them away, and continues. They arrive, as Officer is addressing pinioned Prisoner.

OFFICER—Remain you yet of that rash mind pervert—
Misfaith, defiance—do you choose them still,
And, therewith, death?
PRISONER—Death do I rather choose,
This moment, for myself, than run the chance
In war of dealing death to any man.

Officer signals to those detailed to perform execution.

OFFICER—Then, fire.

(*There is no response to this order*).

A SOLDIER—For me, I will die with him, first!
Blood-guiltless, I will pass, with him, to God.
OFFICER—What, what! More renegades must we dispatch?
Your turn comes after. Is there any left
That has regard for duty? Fire, nor fail!

Quickly the White Messenger has come up. Sees the one Soldier of the line who takes aim, in obedience to command. She has time to fling herself in front of the Prisoner. Receives the shot. Sinks to his feet. Women gather round her, Marussia with the rest.

MARUSSIA—My Beautiful, who saved me out of torment,
Cured my hurt mind, that now is hurt past cure!

The women raise the White Messenger tenderly, trying to staunch her wound.

The Girl throws her arms about the Prisoner. The Officer stands dazed. The Veteran has joined the Group—makes his way to the centre of the Scene.

VETERAN—Lady, why did you this—
WHITE MESSENGER (*Brokenly*)—Because of need;
Because, in person, one must expiate
The sins for which our country stands arraigned.
VETERAN—*Our* Country?
MESSENGER—Yes—not far from here I sprang—
I knew the master and was taught by him. . . .
Now—it is good to die . . . for all is done. . . .
(*She sinks into unconsciousness. Dies*).

An Imperial Officer rides up, reins, and addresses the Company.

OFFICER—Our Emperor's most pacific course has wrought
To satisfy the Powers. I bring you word,
War will not be—God grant, no more shall be.
(*Pressing closer, Officer starts, aghast, as in horrified recognition of the dead*).
Why, this is she who, but a fortnight since,
Had audience with our Emperor, who heard,
As he before has heard, her moving words—
Her pleadings deep as Love, when Love's Divine!
Men, she was *noble! Excellenza* called
At Court. But long ago her place she left,
For this world-visiting of humble folk,
The tillers of the earth, and near to earth.
She thought that these, in every land aroused,

Refusing, everywhere, the call to arms,
The very means and life of War must cease.
Many have thought, but she put deeds to thought.
VETERAN—She spoke of expiation—of her work
As in atonement of our country's sins.
OFFICER—Fantastic, though exalted! 'Tis the way
Of all our thinkers, when the soul is quick,
To take the burden of a general wrong—
The individual is held for all,
And bound to suffer till the wrong be crushed:
And this may in some mystic sense be true.
Something like this our master-thinker taught.

IN MUSCOVY

I

Hear, if ye will, this borrowed line
From the old scholar Herbastein.
"In Muscovy no voice of bird
Through all the Winter Year is heard.—
In Muscovy when comes the hour
Of winter's loosed and broken power,
Upon the instant, everywhere,
In hedges, groves, and orchards bare—
Ere yet the flower, ere yet the leaf—
The birds are singing, free of grief;
So sing, with quivering, blissful throats
Their maddest, sweetest summer notes,
In Muscovy!

"In Muscovy, all unespied
Where through the Winter Year they hide,—
If hollow tree, if winding grot,
If delvèd mine where winds blow not,
Or, lapped on beds of rivers still,
Soft wing by wing, and bill by bill!
Where swallow, lark, and throstle stay
Through winter's teen, no soul can say;
Men only see their instant throng,
And hear the sudden joyful song
In Muscovy!"

* * * * * * * * * * *

Thus far, the scholar Herbastein;
The legend, read anew, be mine!
In Muscovy a mighty Heart
Mid long snow-silence broods apart;
In Muscovy a mystic Soul
But looms through dreams that round it roll

(As when a traveller scarce is known
For wreathing breath, his lips have blown);
That Heart, that Soul, but threads a trance,
With sight beneath the veilèd glance!
It is a music in arrest,—
'Tis folded song in winter-nest!
. . . But now near waking is that Heart,
From wintry trance that Soul shall start;
Ay, yet,—and soon! the birds shall sing,
And all the land-locked land shall ring!
Vesna her banners shall outfling;
And all the world shall know, 'tis Spring
In Muscovy!

II

In Muscovy, O brooding Heart,
No anarch snaps your bonds apart,
Though even now those bonds ye cast!
Your sun toward solstice mounts at last;
In fated fullness of long Time
To greatening Vernal Day ye climb!
So, ever, on this turning sphere,
Each land shall greet its melting year!
Ye are the people of the bourne,
Lit by the Even and the Morn!
Wherefrom, ye have the mystic Soul
Swayed by the tides that dual roll.
In you the East and West inhere;
Ye have the vision of the seer,
Whom like a mantle, thought enwraps—
Let not in dreams that vision lapse!
And unabated strength of thews

Have ye,—in World-emprise to use—
Be not that strength in wrath forespent,
When, up the earth, the shaft is sent,
To say that, close beneath your verge,
The New Day strengthens to emerge;
And yet,—and soon, the birds shall sing,
And make the land-locked land to ring!
Vesna her banners shall outfling,
And all the world shall know, 'tis Spring
In Muscovy!

"THE CHRIST WAS COME AGAIN"

(Suggested by Nesterov's "Mystic Russia")

The Christ was come again, but not as long ago,
In that far golden land where fig and olive grow,
And shepherds lead their flocks where pleasant waters flow.

But 'twas the deep of winter along the Volga side;
White, white the trackless fields; the earth was like a bride,
For bride-song sweetest airs that through the pine trees sighed.

The Christ was come again. He chose our land of snow
To tread with blessing foot, His wonders forth to show.
Came with Him saints we knew—and some we did not know.

His glory round their heads, they softly stood, each one—
The light that framed His head put out the noon-day sun!
They stood with Him to serve—to see His will be done.

These were the friendly saints our ikons show to all;
But other saints stood forth whom we not so would call—
His glory round their heads, they mingled, great and small.

Mark well the thing I say: Till now we knew
them not—
The Saints of the Dark Depths, by happy ones
forgot;
We had not borne to think upon their sordid lot!

For years we'd seen them pass—our very doors they
passed:
The mendicant in rags, to whom the crust we cast;
The girl with clouded brain, whose speech was
holden fast;

The dwarf with elvish locks, whom we so loathed
to meet;
And she we deemed a witch and whom with rods we
beat;
These faced the Blessed Light—and these might
kiss His feet!

For me—I stood afar, in wonder, joy and shame;
Till mine unworthiness at last great love o'ercame;
I felt His eyes seek mine—I dared to breathe His
name!

Oh, was it but a dream The Christ was come again?
The bells of dawn ring out the old, sweet natal
strain;
Our land of snow replies, forever shall He reign!

RED BOOKS AND DARK AGES

How many the rolls in rubric traced,
Some, hidden still, some, an open page,
That tell of old kingdoms and treasures laid waste,
Of good knights gone down in the red battle's rage,
Of hatreds that hardly deep death might assuage.
Then Pity, despised, was a smothered spark;
And the light was quenched both of priest and sage.
Those were the Ages that men called Dark.

Then, a Tamurlaine flung to the world his gage—
Led Asian kings in his train as knaves! . . .
And this was shut in an iron cage,
And those, to the Saracen sold as slaves;
And here, they languished in oubliette graves,
There, cast adrift in a tottering bark,
They drank of the salt of uncharted waves. . . .
But those were the Ages that men called Dark.

The Time Spirit looked on the ruin and waste:
"Out of these shadows a New Age I lead:
That the powers of man be no more debased,
Many a vast emprise I will speed,
Worthy the toil of a Godlike breed."
We were those favored ones . . . but mark!
A swift hand writes, for the future to read:
This is an Age that men will call Dark!

Red Books and *Dark Ages!* Of us it is writ!
There is none in all lands but is blood-guilty, too
(Even we that afar unchallenging sit).
Thus will they say who our footsteps pursue:
The eyes of the Unborn pierce us through—
The accusing cries of the Unborn—hark!
"What is the heritage left us by you—
Ye of the Age that men will call Dark?"

ENVOI

Brothers, how far is it yet to the Dawn,—
The shadow lies deep, the Terrors walk stark?
The Midnight of Time is it past—is it gone?
Or yet, are there Ages that men will call Dark?

PRINCES AND WAR

Whose is the war, on the East, on the West?
Whence, O ye nations, the bad dream ye dream?
How ye kindle the fire in each patriot breast
Till each sees a bride in his sabre's white gleam!
Each fights for his cause—each cause is supreme!
Yet know, however ye boast, or dare,
All ye movers are moved, and 'tis not as ye deem—
Ye are ruled by the Prince of the Power of the Air!

O sovereign lords, that the gauntlet throw down,
Ye lands that have flung at each other your braves
Till War is the word—and from country and town
Defile the long line of your militant slaves,
They sing, as they die, your rallying staves;
But their spirits look down, as they heavenward fare—
They see, as ye see not, the banner that waves
In the darkness—the Prince of the Power of the Air!

Well! When the harvest is reaped that ye sowed,
And the bread from its meal is all bitter with tears,
When Hunger looks in on the children's abode,
Ay, when the child, whose birthright was fears,
With the soulless face of the changeling appears,
What of atonement to such can ye bear?
Will ye not learn—in the eve of your years,
Ye were ruled by the Prince of the Power of the Air?

But now, even now, ye imperial chiefs,
Ye pause in the thick of the darkening world,
With its rolling cloud of remediless griefs,
And ye cry, as the smoke of your guns is upcurled,
Arraigning each other, "Behold, thou hast hurled
This plague on the fields that with harvest were fair!"
Through orbits of terror and wrath are we whirled—
Look you!—The Prince of the Power of the Air!

L'ENVOI

Princes embattled, how have ye prayed?
An invisible legion hurls back your prayer!
The Prince of Peace will ye call to your aid—
Or vail to the Prince of the Power of the Air;

LIFE INDIGNANT

"Vita cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbris."
—Virgil.

It is no cloud that darkens down the day,
No voice of winds that wail the dying year;
Look where a hundred miles of battle sway,
The flight of souls that paltered not with fear,
But on the blade of danger, fronting sheer,
Their all of mortal flung, that, left behind,
Makes of the earth a universal bier,
Where Life Indignant fleets upon the wind!

These answered a strict call, obeyed the will
Of those great lords, the arbiters of war,
Unangered, they went forth, to seek, to kill
Unangered others, driven from afar!
Above them ranged, malignant, Empire's star:
For this their loves, their hearth fires they resigned.
Now free, now undeceived those legions are,
Where Life Indignant fleets upon the wind!

Oh, to have speech with them, those injured hosts
Outwandered from this petty scheme of things!
Oh, to have speech with those high scornful ghosts
Who are no more the patient pawns of kings,
Who care not where the fitful balance swings
Of mundane Justice (aye miscalled The Blind!)
Nor if the world for them the requiem sings
Where Life Indignant fleets upon the wind!

To no Valhalla of the savage eld
  Do they retire, the battle to revive;
Late foes, in a new league they now are held,
  To rouse their kith and kinsmen left alive;
  "Henceforth to herded slaughter let none drive
Your ranks, O long enduring humankind,
  Where goaded men as wild beasts close and strive,
Whence Life Indignant fleets upon the wind!"

ENVOI

See! 'Tis no cloud that darkens down the day,
  Hark! 'Tis no dirge the autumn gales unbind,
But the great spirit host that mounts away,
  Where Life Indignant fleets upon the wind!

THE DRAGONS OF THE AIR

There is a circle of malignant hell
Not given to the Florentine to know.
It is not hidden in the earth below,
But far aloft its fateful legions dwell.

They are not human, though from earth they rise—
They are of him, the Prince who rules the Air
The quiver of his torments on they bear—
The cities cower and fend them from the skies!

The azure and the grey of heaven they snatch
To be their banner; masked in cloud they sail,
The levin-bolts they break in murderous hail—
Up flames the palace roof, the cottage thatch.

They are not human! They renounce their kind,
They join them with the arch-antagonist. . . .
O world that kindly yet remains—resist!
Find means the dragons of the air to bind!

SAID ATTILA THE HUN TO—

It was not here—it was not there,
It was not now—it was not then. . . .
Beyond the bounds of Otherwhere,
Two tyrant lords of vanished men—
They meet in shadowy mail and casque,
They greet, and of each other ask.

(*Two shades whose work on earth was dire,*
Mid darted lights and whelming gloom,
Their eyes the lamps of lethal fire,
Fierce thirst for power their endless doom—
To seek, to be thrown back, to seek! . . .
To learn the triumph of the weak!)

"Lo, I am Attila, who laid
Proud Aquileia in the dust;
The Slav, the Teuton, slaked my blade—
Of blood I had the sacred lust!
Yea, Attila am I; but thou,
Who hast our brand upon thy brow!"

"I, too, made treasure-cities smoke,
And blood with ashes mixed therein;
And from the sky, on sleeping folk,
Mine engines did full vengeance win!"
To whom said Attila the Hun,
"In all of this thou hast well done!"

"But I," the other shade replies,
"Where'er I dealt the killing blow,
Or gave mine iron cross as prize,
Therewith I bade God's blessing go. . . ."
. . . Then, Attila fell back, outdone—
God's scourge, and not His favored son!

THE SILENCE OF ALOST, BELGIUM---1914

[*To save the town of Alost from the fate meted out to Termonde by the German army, the government of Belgium ordered its complete abandonment. When the soldiers entered they found the doors of the houses wide open, provisions in plenty, but no occupants*].

I

Is there food in the larders of Alost,
Are there flagons of wine in the cave?
Is there ease—are the down-beds ready,
Inviting the bold and the brave?

"Yes, there is food in the larder,
And wine—in wine let them lave!
Let it flow for their rioting joyance,
Till the dead shall rise up from the grave!"

II

Are there folk in the dwellings of Alost,
To reach the right hand to the guest?
Fire on the hearth, and the candle
To light the bold war-man to rest?

"No, there are no folk in Alost,
To greet them and pass them the jest!
(None lingers, to feed the sword's hunger,
To offer as target the breast!)"

III

Then, where are the good folk of Alost,
Were wont to be free of their cheer—
That no host from the doorway gives greeting,
No maids at the quaint windows peer?

"On the highroad to Ghent they are drifting—
Like leaves in the wane of the year;
In silence, in silence, in silence—
Like those who come after the bier."

THE HOUSE WITH SEALED DOORS

. . . *"A house with sealed doors, where a family of* 7,000,000 *sits in silence around a cheerless hearth. . . . America opened the window . . . and slipped a loaf of bread into the larder."—Frederick Palmer, in* THE NEW YORK TIMES.

Merchant ships many are on the main.
This that we send plies not for gain—
Ship of the loaves! May her course be straight,
When the starving millions her coming wait!

In a "Happy Province" beyond the sea
("Happy" by fiat—a monarch's decree!)
They have seized their lands, they have taken their stores,
They have shut them up, they have sealed the doors!

The folk within—their table is bare.
But why should the lords of the "Province" care?—
Myrmidons, myrmidons, first to feed;
Afterwards think of the people's need!

Let the arm'd men eat, let the people wait
(Say the lords of the "Province" who parcel out fate),
Let the arm'd men feed—that their strength endure,
That their hearts be lusty, their grasp be sure!

In that "Happy Province" beyond the sea
They are not bond and they are not free;
In silence they sit by their smoldered hearth;
But the winds bear their burden around the earth!

The winds and the waters are rolling along
The rune of their sorrow (too cruel for song!) . . .
Bring food for the family robbed of its stores;
Open a window where sealed are the doors!

Merchant ships many are on the main.
This that we send plies not for gain—
Ship of the loaves! . . . Ye have given them
lead,
Ye lords of the "Province," but we give bread!

TO A GREAT PEOPLE DECEIVED

(An Open Letter)

Why are ye closed as in enchanted walls—
As past a grim stockade to heaven reared,
Ye people that were once so near our hearts,
Ye of the childlike heart, who loved the child—
Makers of homes the world around; where'er
Ye wandered, flowers and arbors traced your path,
And melody companioned all your toil?

How have ye changed! And wherefore are ye changed?
Who hath inclosed you in enchanted walls,
Where still ye are deceived, lodging belief
In injury that none have wrought on you?
Who hath infected you with venomed hate,
That, counting the wide world your foe, ye send
Your innocent mild tillers of the soil,
Your pliers of the loom, your student youth,
Armed as one man, willed as one man, to kill?
And, draining off a cup more baneful far
Than that Circean draught which monsters made,
These that ye send a maddened herd become,
Scourging the lands that border you each way!

Why made ye war? At whose behest let loose
A curse of crashing hail and eager flame,
Death from the skies and from the delvèd ground?
Who hath so cozzened you—for worship raised
An eidolon of Empire-over-all,
Like that long-vanished Scythian tribe who chose
A buried sword to be its god supreme!
Who bade ye, while a human-age went by,

To never let the Martian fires die down,
But forge and foundry serve both day and night,
Where molten metal ran to missile death,
Against the long-sought opportunity!

O kindly people that we knew till now,
(And, kindly still, beyond the grim stockade),
Not of your free accord has this been done;
But they of iron will, projecting far,
Have wrought you to their ends—and, chiefly, one
Who arrogates himself to Heaven so near
That evermore his counsel hence he draws. . . .
Iron! He gives iron crosses for your meed!
And dying eyes of Valor, far from home,
Look, languishing, toward where he keeps, afar—
Safe and remote, fed proud—at cost of you!

O people once so loved—still loved, by us,
By us who dwell where Freedom holds her sway,
Can we not reach you past enchanted walls?
Take, now, the hands reached out to you—take hands
Of all the world, outreached, while prayers ascend
That ye may break the sorcerous bonds, at length,
That keep ye from the brotherhood of man
That longs to make all war a broken sword. . . .
Du liebes Vaterland, sei frei, sei frei!

THE GOD AT ESSEN

"The Holy Spirit has descended upon me. As the German Emperor I am the instrument of the Most High. I am the sword and the rod. Woe and death be unto those who resist my will and who do not believe in my mission. Woe and death unto all, cowards and enemies. The German God demands their destruction."—The Kaiser to his Army in East Prussia.

I

Of all of the gods that man ordains (in man's image made)
Which one is the Lord of Hosts who sendeth invincible aid,
Who lendeth the ear not in vain, when his suppliant millions have prayed,
But he grindeth the face of the foe and breaketh his bones with the rod?—
Who but the "German God!"

II

And who is that god's right arm—say who is his rod and his sword,
Who chanteth his pæan, and forgeth ahead with his miscreant horde?
I answer you, "He that hath made him—even the Lord of his Lord;
And he giveth his helm to his idol—his smile, his imperial nod—
Lo, you, the 'German God!' "

III

And where is the seat of that god—of the Lord
of the lordliest host?
At Essen, at Essen he dwelleth and launcheth his
insolent boast,
And raineth unmeasured destruction on peoples of
inland or coast;
Iron and Blood is his watchword on ways foreor-
dained to be trod—
Lo, you, the "German God!"

IV

At Essen, at Essen the Cyclops hath toiled while an
age hath gone by
(Europe, ye caught not the glance of that subtle
malevolent eye?);
And the creatures he fashioned have swarmed
through the shuddering earth and the sky;
He hath winged them with terror through heaven,
on earth with the thunder hath shod—
Lo, you, the "German God!"

V

There are other gods. . . . And what if their
hosts, with innumerous feet,
Moving from East and from West shall march on
that deity's seat?
The glint of his steel they will darken, his sword to
a plowshare will beat,
And over his vaults of destruction will draw a
green mantle of sod!
Then, what of the "German God?"

"SOME OTHER"

These are the days when the temples fall,
When vainly our brothers on Deity call,
Who will not—or can not—aid crucified men!
If I hold in my heart Some Other—what then?

Once were the things unknown as known,
And my fathers' "thus saith" I made my own;
Once, there were Giver and Gift—and I,
With thanks to render and please thereby!
Giver and Gift—the Giver was God,
And Life was the Gift, at His sovereign nod.
Thus spake my fathers, and thus spake theirs.
And we filled the world with pæans and prayers;
To the Giver pæans, for that He gave,
To the Giver prayers, that the Gift He would save—
The fragile, beautiful, fleeting thing
That would ever be forth on its flight-poised wing—
The beautiful, dread, unappealable one,
Undoer, renewer—never undone—
Life, the transformer—through shadow or sun.

And only now, I begin to see
How Giver and Gift—and pitiful Me
May Some Other contain. . . . O Name Unknown,
Not unto me nor my fathers shown.

THE PEACE-PACT

They were foes as they fell in that frontier fight.
They were friends as they lay with their wounds unbound,
Waiting the dawn of their last morning-light.
It was silence all, save a shuddering sound
From the souls of the dying that rose around;
And the heart of the one to the other cried,
As closer they drew, and their arms enwound,
"There will be no war on the Other Side."

As the souls of the dying mounted high
It seemed they could hear the long farewell!
Then together they spake, and they questioned why—
Since they hated not—why this evil befell?
And neither the Frank nor the German could tell
Wherefore themselves and their countrymen died.
But they said that Hereafter in peace they should dwell—
"There will be no war on the Other Side."

As they languished there on that field accursed,
With their wounds unbound, in their mortal pain,
Spake one to the other, "I faint from thirst!"
And the other made answer, "What drops remain
In my water flask thou shalt surely drain!"
As he lifted the flask the other replied,
"I pledge thee in this till we meet again—
There will be no war on the Other Side!"

And it came to pass as the night wore deep
  That fever through all their veins was fanned,
So that visions were theirs, (yet not from sleep),
  And each was flown to his own loved land.
  But rousing again, one murmured, "Thy hand!
Thou art my brother—naught shall divide;
  Something went wrong . . . but understand,
There will be no war on the Other Side."

ENVOI

Comrades of peace, we can give but our tears
  As we look on the waste of the human tide. . .
Yet forever one cry so haunts my ears—
  "There will be no war on the Other Side."

"TELLE EST LA VIE"

It is long ago since I sat in the shade
Of the maisonette, by the Verdun route,
Sipping the cider my grandmère made
(Rest her soul!) from our orchard fruit;
But, sweeter and wilder than drops from her still,
Were those other streams that I drank at will.

For grandpère was there, with his half-shut eyes;
With his curious smile and his golden tongue,
And his sidelong look that was mocking but wise,
As he read my thought—so simple and young!
And the end of the story—'twould always be,
Half-sigh and half-chuckle, "Telle est la vie!"

It is true that his tales were the strangest known:
Of the loup-garou that was shot at last;
Of the castle's maiden, so strangely flown,
But who young returned, though an age had passed.
It was Morgue la Fay that had held her so long
Until Love released her by spells more strong!

Of knights and trouvères I had my fill. . . .
Then his stories grew homely—of farm and of flock;
Of marriages made by the Good God's will,
And of dances that whirled till all-o'clock!
And at last he came to the crimson tale
That I waited for, and that would not fail.

For he told of a France that vainly bled,
Of the long black siege, of the unheard prayers
(But those of our foe—they were heard, instead!);
Of the Lady in stone and the wreaths she wears:—
"You will give her your own, with your vows, Maxime,
When our dear Lost Lands you shall help redeem!"

Then, was there silence some little while;
And my thoughts were on flight for *this* very hour,
When my lance should be one of a glittering file
To rescue those lands from an alien power!
Then my grandpère wistfully glanced at me:
"I shall not be there but—telle est la vie!"

"CHRISTMAS TRUCE?"

Make truce, ye blindly warring hosts
While holds the blessed Christmastide?—
Brief dream of peace at winter-posts?—
No, no, fight on—Red Mars decide!

Make truce? O irony supreme!
But if ye will, from out The Word
This word best names such truce, I deem—
I come to send not peace but a sword!

THE WOMAN'S CRY

"All the posters were printed in red. 'Red!' cried the women, and there was some weeping among them; but the men for the most part took it quietly, seriously, and with sad submissiveness." —[*St. Petersburg newspaper.*]

"Red!" cried the women by the Neva's tide. . . .
And what they're crying by the Neva's tide
They're crying, too, in France, the Beautiful,
And 'neath the lindens of the Fatherland,
And farther yet, on ancient Danube's banks!
What boots it that you cry, O woman-souls,
Your strong ones going hence—(I mark it well
In "sad submissiveness" they're going hence!)
Your strong ones are a herd; the lash is swung,
And dumb they go—they dream no other way!

"Red!" cried the women. I cry, too—in vain. . .
I know what I would do, if but my wit
Equalled my swelling heart—and if my tongue
The Pentacostal gift of tongues might seize—
Not speech of courts, nor sinuous subtle phrase,
But peasant power of straight appeal to hearts,
Words like to glowing coals that neighbors pass
From hearth to hearth—words like the ringing axe
When the arm swings it through the heart of oak,
Words like the fervid plowshare, driven deep!
Might I but speak their native speech to them,
In some four countries of this world, gone mad,
The children of the soil should hear me cry:—
Now, wherefore are ye driven forth to War?
Ye have not made it, and ye hate no man,
That ye would go to hunt him to his death

(He hunting you—yet bearing you no hate!).
Stand in your fields, your shops, and do not go!
Be ye not "mobilized," but stand like stones;
And if to prison ye be haled, and if
They rain upon your hearts their leaden rain
Because ye will not serve, stand till ye fall!
Ye can but die—but so, die innocent,
Having, yourselves, slain no man innocent!
So, fall, the protomartyrs Who Fought War,
Glorious and sacred on the lips of men
Who shall be, and their heritage *Your* Peace!
"Red!" cried the women. Let them cry no more.

"SHADOW OF SWORDS"

He spake but truth, that prophet wild and gaunt,
Whose mortal body in Medina lies;
And his mad, fierce words the soul of the world still haunt—
"Under the shadow of swords is Paradise!"

I deem that the heart of man is but savage still,
And his praise of peace but an ill-worn half-disguise;
His "War must be" but masks his warlike will—
"Under the shadow of swords is Paradise!"

WE MOURN FOR PEACE

[*For the Peace Parade, August* 29]

"Who is this pacing sisterhood,
Moving in silent, broken mood,
Clad all in mourning weeds?
Are ye the celebrants of martial deeds—
The work of dauntless spirits lifted high
From many a red field where the brave for country die?"

No! We are not the celebrants of warlike deeds—
We mourn for World-Peace slain,
Hid in our hearts until she rise again!
We hate your fields of death,
Your brazen Mars that leads
Where men are reaped as grain!
Your "Glory" is to us but venomous breath!
A-near our hearts your "causes" do not lie—
Nor one, nor other, O ye warring States!

But we are they who hate your mutual hates;
And we are they whom ye shall ask in vain,
In home's dear covert to remain—
Praying at home—yet serving still your needs,
Yielding to you our sons, our brothers and our mates—
We mourn for World-Peace slain—
We mourn—but oh, not that alone!
A heresy through all our ranks is blown:
The order old is changing—shall not come again;
No more shall tender cowardice restrain,
The "Call of Country" shall betray no more,
To trick our tears in bravery of a smile,

Gazing upon the glittering file
Of those that march away to war (so fain!)—
Of whom what remnant shall their fate restore?

We—celebrants of martial deeds?
Trading in precious lives more dear than are our own?
At last, O warring States, the soul-of-woman know—
We will not give our men, to serve your schemes,
Your cozzening plans, and your Imperial dreams!
And if ye seize them, we to slaughter too will go,
And in the breach ourselves will throw;
Upon us, too, the quiver of your hatreds rain!
We mourn the World-Peace slain!

THE FLAG

There were three colors in the banner bright
On which the maidens stitched and stitched all day.
Their needles glanced, for with the morning-light
Each saw her hero-lover march away.

Save one the maidens stitch with fond proud haste;
And her they chide, "Why do thy fingers lag?
Think but how fair will gleam, by farm and waste,
The red and white and blue of their loved flag."

The maiden lifted neither hands nor eyes:
"The red of flowing blood I see," she said,
"The white of faces upturned to the skies,
The blue of heaven wide above the dead."

SPILT WINE

A flower of youth—a Linus boy,
He bore a glass of purple wine;
His step was Pride, his glance was Joy—
A flower of youth divine!

One shattering blow! The crystal broke—
Fast flowed away the precious wine. . . .
It was the brutish Earth that spoke,
"I drink but what is mine!

"For mother of all fruits am I,
Who send them up, to tree and vine,
To give them back should none deny,
When I with thirst shall pine."

I looked again—So quickly shed,
The flower of youth,—his blood for wine!
And brutish Earth, deep-murmuring, said,
"I drink but what was mine."

LOVE, YOUTH, WAR

He was a lover, he was young.
  Youth ruled his blood, hope lit his eye;
And when the call to arms was rung
  Needs must he to that call reply.
He spake of freedom, spake of fame—
  "When victory's pæan should be sung
Let his be no unhonored name!"
  He was a lover, he was young.

He was a lover, he was young;
  And she who was to be his bride,
Blanching, upon his words she hung—
  Yet bound the sword upon his side,
He kissed her lips, through tears she smiled,
  "Our country calls." To horse he sprung,
And down the street the troop defiled.
  He was a lover, he was young.

He was a lover, he was young.
  (His country calls, and love too sways!)
Far up a window wide is flung—
  He feels, not sees, a kindling gaze.
(His country calls, love too—and pride!)
  She stands her weeping maids among,
Through tears she sees him glorified.
  He was a lover, he was young.

He was a lover, he was young.
Well did he fight. On many a field
He saw his conquering colors flung,
Love's triumph every victory sealed.
Love was the deed; love was the dream, the while
To his dark locks the night dew clung,
With dust from many a travelled mile.
He was a lover, he was young.

He was a lover, he was young.
Yes, yes; not country, freedom, fame,
But love gave to his failing tongue
The last word it should ever frame,
And that last word—it was her name!
For whose sake was such tribute wrung?
O proud, proud love, thine was the blame!
He was a lover, he was young.

THE RED-CROSS NURSE

The battle-smoke still fouled the day,
  With bright disaster flaming through;
Unchecked, absorbed, she held her way—
  The whispering death still past her flew.

A cross of red was on her sleeve;
  And here she stayed, the wound to bind,
And there, the fighting soul relieve,
  That strove its Unknown Peace to find.

A cross of red . . . yet one has dreamed
  Of her he loved and left in tears;
But unto dying sight she seemed
  A visitant from other spheres.

The whispering death—it nearer drew,
  It holds her heart in strict arrest . . .
And where was one, are crosses two—
  A crimson cross is on her breast!

HEALING TOUCH

She hath no word, but with her hand
She can entreat you, or command.
And pain, whether of flesh or heart,
Can take away—a clean-drawn dart.
With but her touch—with but her touch,
She can unloose Despair's wild clutch.

She knows not why it is, or how,
Laying her hand on hand or brow,
You shall than drink of sleep's delight,
Who have not slept for nights on nights,
Or waken from the haunted world
Where you in madness have been hurled.

Such is my lady's healing hand.
But not herself can understand
Whence is the gift that brings such store
Of peace to those whose need was sore.
But if she deemed that gift her own,
She saith its power would then be flown.

THE MARCH OF THE DEAD

O all that have in battle died,
  Your race—your cause—it matters not;
Entombed in hurried trenches wide,
  Or lonely grave-mound soon forgot—
Your Dead March comes upon my soul,
  With long, resurgent, endless roll!

For still, the Terror stalks the lands,
  With thirst that only blood may quench;
Each year, new sacrificial bands
  Some spot of earth with crimson drench;
All times, the Terror seeks his prey—
  Your Dead March never dies away!

O all! O ye (my kinfolk race)
  Whom forty summers have o'erbloomed,
Ye others—swart, or pale of face,
  Who last, in sunrise lands, are doomed—
Your Dead March (ever in mine ears)
  Demands, and hath, my woman's tears!

I mock you not with flowers bestrown
  On grassy mound or fresh-turned clod;
For you but thorns—such thorns have known
  As stabbed the brows of Very God:
Your Dead March saith that ye, each one,
  Forth led, was scourged, betrayed, undone!

How vain are tablets, wreaths and vows—
The facile guerdons pledged by Earth!
Oh, rather, let me go and rouse
Each moaning, desolated hearth,
Till stifled sobs grow outcries strong,
That Heavenward lift their tale of wrong!

Ay, be it witnessed in the sphere,
Where late your viewless feet have throbbed,
That those who sit in ashes here
Were robbed of you—that ye were robbed!
Oh, out of life unjustly hurled,
Your Dead March shakes the solid world!

It shakes the Earth, that holds you slain,
The Sovereign State, the lording Laws,
Forbidding them heart's blood to drain—
To loose man's life—for any cause!
Your Dead March pierce the World's great heart,
Till wrath dries up the tears that start!

THE HARVESTERS

(*France,* 1914)

"Look! the harvest stands unreaped
  In the silent golden field!
Where is he who should be there,
  Wont the sickle keen to wield?
Look! the vineyard clusters darken,
  Who is there to store its yield?
Yester eve, at angelus—
  Ah, how many with us kneeled!"

"Hush! the reaper—he is reaped,
  He is brother to the clod;
Not like sheaves can he be raised.
  And the vintager—my God!
Is become the vintage heaped,
  Only waiting to be trod,
When the rich wine of his life
  Shall be drunken by the sod!"

"Woman, you your land must serve;
  Breast the silent golden corn;
Do not stay for words or tears
  Till the teeming field be shorn,
Till the clusters dark with wine
  To the presses shall be borne.
Him, the valiant, whom you loved,
  Proudly shall our cross adorn."

"Hush! the reaper—he is reaped!
On the breast that breathes no more
What avails your honor cross?
What avails the harvest store,
When the land is stripped of men?
Hearts shall thirst and hunger sore.
Aye, no blood of grape shall hearten
When the wine of life ye pour!"

* * * * * * * * * * * *

"Women, now the corn is ground
And the wine is in the cave,
Sow the fields and prune the vines:
When next summer's harvests wave,
Praise be yours, and yours alone,
For the bounty that ye gave.
Go, be mothers to the soil
That is orphaned of the brave."

"Hush! the reaper—he is reaped!
Ask that we the soil prepare
And the red wine seal away!
Grief all fields for us shall bear,
Grief the cup that we must drink.
And the children of our care
Shall be starved for father love—
Aye, the years of famine fare!"

"I WILL GO OUT AND LOOK AT THE FLOWERS"

There was one of my kin (of another day)
When the Riddle of Life defied her powers,
And her fretted heart rebelled, would say,
"I will go out and look at the flowers."

And after a while—like those who had quaffed
Of the cup that Helen distilled in her bowers,
Returned from the garden, she softly laughed,—
"I have been out to look at the flowers!"

My heart is so ill with the growth of ills
The world is sheaving, these harvest hours—
The sword that smites, and the shell that kills,
While Life lies charred 'neath the burning towers!

Nothing to do—it will be as *Who* wills?
Helpless to aid, how my hurt soul cowers! . . .
Let me drink of the cup that pure Beauty distills—
I will go out and look at the flowers!

THE WOUNDED SOUL

The wounds I cannot bear are those
I daily feel (yet are not mine to take) :—
The bruiséd Loves, the gentle hearts that break
Around me everywhere from wanton blows;
The poisoned gashes Time skills not to close;
The wearing fever-wounds no draught can slake;
Imbedded darts that, drawn, bring in their wake
Life, and the bubbling sigh that ends all woes.

These are the hurts my soul still undergoes
(Beside, what wounds may *I* unweeting make?)
Still on and on the tide of anguish flows,
And that I suffer seems for no one's sake. . . .
World-wounded so, my soul outwearied grows,
Nor finds its balm until from out the world it wake.

THE WASTEFULNESS OF WAR

What moved the world to war in times long past?
A Helen's wrong (if ever Helen sat
In Ilion, subtly smiling on the fray!)
Or, to command the entrance of a tomb,—
A sacred tomb empty a thousand years!
Or, for some other cause hot hearts devised,
And, wantons! let the blood of nations for!
The World grows old, and may not longer fain
The hand more instant is, than is its thought.
The World is wakened to the cost of things,
And with deliberate eye the compt surveys,
And disallows the prodigality
That was the glory of its reckless youth.
Dear the resources of each Land, to each,
And nought thereof—or gold within the hill,
Or waving gold upon the broad-sown plain,
Or output of the driven, rhythmic loom,
Or by-drift of the mill, or fluttering ash
From chemic fire, permits the thrifty World
To go to waste—but serve some turn it must,
Whereby is profit to that Land—and all.

Say to the Nations hastening to destroy:
"Are ye so frugal in each thing save one,—
Save War's vast profligacy? O beware,
Ye leave no room for future lavishment!
Inviolate, all else between your hands,
O World grown old, conserving all thou hast:
Thou wastest nought beside,—wilt thou waste
men?"

THE ALTAR OF MOLOCH

(Balkan War)

This latest Year of our Lord hath Moloch an altar ordained,
And fed it with flesh of men and the wine of their lives hath drained!
And we sit afar and secure, and the Beauty of Peace we praise—
I am sick at my heart at the tale of the world in these blood-crimsoned days!

For the eyes of my soul see the altar that smokes to the South and the East,
Its victims the tiller of fields, the maiden, the child, and the priest;
And a savage (called Christian!), a flamen that runs with the torch and the sword,
Scoureth from village to village, serving his altar abhorred!

He hath taken his tithe of Nigrita, and Seres hath rendered grim toll;
He hath plucked out the eye that was glazing, and mocked at the fluttering soul;
The cotter he sacked in his dwelling, and mangled the dead on the plain,
And sped with a ribald song the victim dishonored and slain.

Ah, ah! what burnt off'ring was there—the helpless, the aged, the weak!
Their flesh is now fallen in ashes, their spirits indignant yet speak.
Hear them, thou bright one, thou fair one, thou Greece! rearisen and strong,
And raze to the ground that altar abhorred, and avenge their great wrong!

O LITTLE PEOPLES!

O little peoples, I will sing of you.
Far off ye dwelt, far off, and sent your cries
That none did heed and few their purport knew.
Continually your burning pleas would rise,
The great ones in security reposed,
Continually their careful ear was closed!

O little peoples! But with narrowed eyes
The great ones looked on you; they set you out,
As in a game, and here and there made prize,
As pleased them best, and moved you all about!
The game went merrily; they took, they gave,
They changed your bounds by inland or by wave.

O little peoples, they betimes made friends
And, other times, they left you bared to wrath—
Whatever best might serve their heartless ends!
A foe unspeakable pressed on your path;
It could not in their breasts compunction stir!
O little peoples, and how small ye were!

But, little peoples, came a day, a day
In which the burden of old wrongs was heard;
To some attending throne your prayers made way,
And down they drew a world-dividing word
That flames in vengeful portents near and far.
O little peoples, and how great ye are!

THE DESTRUCTION OF PSARA

A Paraphrase from the Modern Greek

High upon fire-wasted Psara walked Glory—
Walked all alone, repeating the story
Of her heroes beloved—a gallant young guard;
And she gathered and wove for the wreath round
her head,
Only some grasses, all withered and charred,
That remained in that desolate land of the dead.

THE HEART AT MISSOLONGHI

1824-1913

Something stirs at Missolonghi—
Hellas, heed it!
Something that has long lain quiet
In your proud and tender keeping—
Something long since vowed and given—
Dedicate to you and Freedom!
And you shrined it in high marble
Fronting the blue wave of Patras,
Looking far on fruited Zante.
Thus you mourned and thus you honored
One all yours by Song's adoption
(Every poet truest Hellene—
Land maternal of his spirit!).

Something stirs at Missolonghi—
Hellas, heed it!
Something shrined in your white marble,
Heart that once for you throbbed greatly,
Heart of man that scorned mere poet,
Vowed to yield you man's full service!
Death that service intercepted,
Stilled the heart's heroic pulsing.
But a fiery spark yet lingered,
Sure to waken when you wakened—
When deep thunder, heard through waters,
Brought the message of your triumph,
Told that Islam fled your war fleet!

Something stirs at Missolonghi—
Hellas, heed it!
Heart of man and heart of poet,
Heart that, throbbing, scorned injustice,
Scourged dissembling, pierced all falseness!
Now that fervid Dust outcrieth
On the Council of the Nations
(Avid, watchful in partition):
"Yield ye, yield ye unto Hellas
What her valor but retaketh,
Grudge her not her ancient kingdom!"
Something stirs at Missolonghi—
Hellas, heed it—Europe, heed it!

THE THREE CONSTANTINES

(A Prophecy of Modern Greece)

Land of the Delphic murmurs, long since mute,
One oracle thy Delphian never gave
To-day breathes through thy mountain shepherd's flute,
And runs from Epirus to the Ægean wave!

They know it by Athena's seat divine,
They speak it by the far Thessalian plain—
What Constantine once built, what Constantine
Once lost, a Constantine shall yet regain!

What now? A Constantine is on thy throne!
(Thou heark'nest still that voice from out thy past).
Soon, Hellas, mayst thou come into thine own,
And touch Byzantium's sacred goal, at last!

That mirrored wonder of the Bosporus tide—
Palace and colonnade and jeweled dome,
Thine were they once, ere Islam's jealous pride;
What turn of warring fates shall call thee home!

(Perchance Muscovia in her mighty sweep,
Melting to seaward all her cumbering snows,
Shall give to thee a prize she may not keep—
To thee approved by both her friends and foes!)

Yes, yes, my Beautiful—my deathless one,
  Thou shalt regain thy long-lost heritage,
And they who reft it from thee be undone,
  As, East and West these ethnic tempests rage.

My Beautiful, thou wast an outcast long,
  A mourner midst thy desecrated tombs;
The hills intreasured thy wild klephtic song,
  And thy great speech was taught mid cavern-
    glooms.

Thy scholars left thee, but thy lore they spread;
  They gentled nations harsh and new in power.
These praised thy learning, but they deemed thee
    dead,
  One bard—in Albion—hailed thy waking hour!

He gave his life to help to make thee free;
  His heart thou hast within a marble shrine. . . .
If it were living, it would beat for thee
  And Glory, 'neath thy latest Constantine!

SOULS IN SIEGE

I have dreamed an ill dream of a leaguered fort
The toying Fate hath made her sport;
For they hope against hope in that compassed town,
With the rain of fire still rattling down.
They have Flame and Sword at the outer gate,
And Hunger they have for a bosom mate!
They have bursting shell, their paths to cleave,
And the searchlight flare to lamp their eve.
There is Death without, there is Death within,
For that handful brave of our human kin;
And the words of a Scripture, stark and dread,
Once more of the Souls in Siege are said:
For at morn they say, Would God it were night;
And at eve, Would God it were morning light—
For the fear of their hearts, wherewith they fear,
And the sight of their eyes, as the Terror draws near!

WOLFE AND MONTCALM

(*The Plains of Abraham,* 1759)

They are forever dear to me,
  The very brothers of my soul,
Two foemen brave as brave could be—
  The first on either battle roll.

On the high Plains, in Morning's eye,
  Each fell—in onset, or defence!
Each held back death the while the cry
  "They run!" aroused his fading sense.

Each held back death to ask "Who runs?"
  And unto each his death was sweet:
To this, because his flag had won;
  To that, because of sheer defeat!

Immortal each in word and deed—
  Of either cause I little reck;
Not yet can I their story read
  And keep the stinging tears in check!

I mourn for both, and such as they
  On every hateful army's roll;
Shame, shame, on causes all that slay
  Through War the brothers of my soul!

"A GOOD SPORT"

What! Are the odds all against you?
  Are you losing, bout after bout?
The struggle has not recompensed you;
  For it's not your name that they shout,
And it's not your deeds they report!
Well—and what of it? Be a good sport.

Instead of the prize, of the pæan,
  There's nothing for you but rout,
The verdict all men can agree on,
  "Poor fellow—he's down, and out!"
Your favor no longer they court.
Well—and what of it? Be a good sport.

What were those words of the Roman—
  Of Cato who kept his heart stout,
Whose spirit knocked under to no man?—
  "The Gods for the winner, no doubt,
But Cato for him who falls short!"
Be good to yourself—and be a good sport.

Perchance, if Fortune had found you,
  Some other had gone without.
Laugh though the Fates have not crowned you,
  Laugh when they buffet and flout.
Do they make you their plaything? Retort,
"Send what ye will—I will be a good sport!"

EAGLE AND LION

Add ye—add ye the Eagle's pinion
To the Lion's tread and his manéd wrath!
Join ye the land and the air's dominion,
Together prevail on the deep sea's path!

I

Mother of Celt, and of Cymric, and Briton,
Nurse of lone isles in the Asian main,
Deep in thy heart is the mother-love written—
Who ever sought it, and sought it in vain?

II

Thou gatherest all with enfoldings maternal,—
Races wide-sundered, the fair and the swart,
Sunburnt, or scorched by the frost wind hibernal—
Thou holdest them all in thy cherishing heart!

III

These are mere aliens—but thou hadst a daughter!
Her firstling words—they were lisped at thy knee:
Thou hearest her voice, beyond the gray water,
How like is the voice—the face like to thee!

IV

Thou hearest her singing Liberty's pæan!
(She learned it from thee, she was rocked on thy breast.)
Its echoes are heard in the Isles Caribbean,—
From the seas in the east to the seas in the west!

V

From thee she inherits a largess of story:
'Thy towers, and thy tombs, and the music eterne
Of the bards who, still chanting of valor and glory,
Deny that their ashes are cold in the urn!

VI

From thee she inherits the deathless tradition,
Yet she will repay, and with increase will bless:
The hopes of the race, in a fuller fruition,
Inherit from her—and inherit no less!

VII

Toilers of hers and of thine, in the quarry;
Riders of thine and of hers, on the plains;
Soon, perchance, proven in sea-fight and foray,
One is the blood that leaps in your veins!

VIII

Mother from daughter who shall dissever,
Who overthrow the fabric ye rear?
The bond that ye make, it shall bind forever:—
These shall revere it, and those shall fear!

IX

(Fear it shall they who with Faith would palter,
Their boast — their reproach — immemorial Wrong!
Fear it shall they—and the red hand shall falter,
Caught back by the hand of the stern and the strong!)

X

Yours be the power that, o'ercoming, assuages,
  Yours to bind Evil, and Good to release;
By you be fulfilled the dream of the ages,
  Conquer the World—and cede it to Peace!

Join ye the land and the air's dominion,
  Together prevail on the deep sea's path!
Add ye—add ye the Eagle's pinion
  To the Lion's tread and his manéd wrath!

HASTEN THE DAY

Angel, Angel of the Lord,
Hasten the Day!. . .
As I went upon my way,
Hark, I heard a heavenly crying,
By the four winds onward borne,
Through the Night of Centuries flying:
"Peace on earth, good-will to men."
. . . But I have seen a sword—
And it seems so very far to Morn.

Angel, Angel of the Lord,
Hasten the Day! . . .
As I go upon my way,
Echoes of that sweet entreating
Haunt the dim ways of the Night—
Float above arm'd legions meeting,
Hearths forlorn and women's tears.
. . . I think how men have warred,
And it seems so very far to Light.

THE PEACE CHILD

"And a little Child shall lead them"

It is the Child the Ages knew,
  Yet knew they but in part;
For still, abroad the wild-fire blew—
  Still War inflamed each heart!

It is the Child the Ages knew . . .
  He to the desert fled:
The savage wild He softly drew,
  And from His hand He fed.

The lion saith, "Thou art our Strength;"
  The lamb, "Our Meekness, Thou!"
Oh, see! They all are led, at length,
  Beneath the olive bough!

He binds with Love the fierce and weak,
  They follow at His call!
But still He seeks—ah, still must seek,
  The one most loved of all!

He fronts that one, with shining face—
  With eyes that all things see:
"O Man, hast thou not yet a place
  For Peace—for Peace and Me?"

THE BOUNDS

(1915)

In those venturous days when my day was young,
(Drunken with life as one drunken with wine!
A song in my heart and its tune on my tongue),
There never was spirit higher than mine;
And whether the task were rough or fine,
All that was in me would I bestow.
But, as on I fared, came a challenge divine,
"This is as far as thou canst go!"

And a barrier rose that I could not part.
To myself I spake: "Thou hast foolishly wrought;
Turn from thine emulous strivings toward art.
With the One dwells the beauty that raptures thy thought,
Greater than beauty by thee must be sought!"
Godward I struggled through years; and lo!
On the wind of the spirit the warning was brought,
"This is as far as thou canst go!"

Deeply I questioned my human heart:
"Was it even so with the world that is done;
My brothers of old, did they act well their part?
Then, why does their story so darkly run;
Were they stayed in their course, so bravely begun?"
And the spirit replied: "It was even so,
The evil they wrought they might not shun;
That was as far as they could go."

I dreamed, how I dreamed, that this day of ours
Was the day of peace (of prophet and sage),
Crowning the deeds of our nobler powers;
That, servants of good, we received our wage
And were proud of the record that stood for our age
On the books of time. But now I know
We might not escape the blots on the page;
This was as far as we could go!

ENVOI

Clear was the dawn of the day; but alas!
How black are the clouds that the heavens o'ergrow!
The Bounds, my brothers, we could not pass;
This was as far as we could go!

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